

**METHODS OF ENABLING DISCONNECTED CHURCHES TO
BECOME COMPASSIONATE CONGREGATIONS**

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by
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Abstract

The purpose of this research project is to show that through contemplative practices church members can increase their compassion and therefore be more prepared to engage in genuine connection and ministry with those who are estranged from the church. The study begins by exploring the universality of estrangement and God's will to have people create life-giving connections in communion with God and other people. A major issue relating to the estrangement of all humans is the predominance of migration. This is shown in the earliest writings of the Bible and continues down to this day. This project explores the factors affecting migration, the extent of migration in Southern California and its effects on society. The study explores the role of the church in furthering connection with the community. Showing that God is a missional God, the study demonstrates that Christians are called to a mission of outreach to those who are estranged. Looking at contemplative practices, the study shows their impact on one's ability to connect. The experiment conducted with ten church members confirmed what research showed about the ability of these practices to increase compassion through spiritual/contemplative exercises. Showing that a church needs to be a place of hope and stability, I discuss the need for churches to change so that they will become places where those who are estranged can become connected to God and people.

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To my wife, Joy, and my children, Jasmine and Joshua, I could not have done this without
your prayers and support. Thank you.

Introduction

A. Of estrangement and the Good News of God

Humankind's estrangement from God and God's plan for reconciliation have always been the central theme of the Bible. This is the focal message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The main reason behind the creation of humanity in the image of God is so that both God and humanity can achieve eternal fellowship with each other. Unfortunately, this grand plan of God was interrupted by the coming of sin into the world. This fall from grace brought the downfall of humanity and estrangement from God and from fellow human beings and the very nature surrounding humans. Paul Tillich discusses this estrangement in his book, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 2: Existence and the Christ*. He suggests humankind is estranged from the "ground of his being, from other beings, and from himself."¹

According to Karl Barth, "God's revealing of himself to man, his making himself known out of his hiddenness, presupposes that man is separated from God but should not be so, revelation being a repairing of the damage."² In order to repair the damage of separation, God initiated a reconciliation process in which God reconciles the world to himself through the death of Christ on the cross. In 2 Corinthians 5:18 (NRSV), the Bible says that "God who reconciled us to himself through Christ." Because of this, we are no longer enemies, ungodly, sinners, or powerless. Instead, the love of God has been poured out in our hearts through God's Holy Spirit whom he has given to us (Romans 5:5). It is an event that changed the total state of our lives forever. This is the good news of God—God's love and grace overcoming humankind's shortcomings and estrangement.

¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology Vol II: Existence and the Christ* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), 44.

² Karl Barth, *Instruction in the Christian Religion Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 72.

In Genesis 3, the Bible shows how no one is ever quite the same after knowingly committing a sin. Look at Adam and Eve. Their very act of sin happened after God had instructed them not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge (Genesis 2:16-17, NIV). Nobody had to tell them that they had done something wrong, but they knew. Moments before, everything seems friendly and joyful. All of nature seemed obedient to their very wish, and life was good. Then suddenly, they felt guilty, fearful, ashamed, and estranged as if every creature in the garden had witnessed their wrongdoing and condemned them. Feeling bare, they tried to cover themselves and hide showing that estrangement from God immediately. The virtue of their innocence began to lose its shine.

Indeed, sin creates a sense of estrangement from God that affects enormously a person's life and mind. In the Epistle, Paul reminds Titus, "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15, NRSV). Sin distorts the mind to the extent that one no longer looks at life in the same way. We love to look at young children. This is because we love to see their beauty and their innocence. Though, what happens when they become adults? Sin begins to alter the way a person looks at life and the community around them. With maturity, people can become distrustful, competitive, suspicious, sarcastic, prejudiced, self-centered, and uninvolved. It is therefore sin that has the potential to disconnect humanity from God and the rest of God's creative world.

No matter how you interpret the Creation narratives in the book of Genesis, the story of God seeking Adam and Eve in the garden is a powerful illustration. God's simple question drives home the touching sense of loss: "Where are you?" The initial communion between God and humankind has been destroyed. Adam and Eve hid themselves because of their shame,

forgetting, as we all do, that God knows the answer to his own rhetorical question. God explains the consequences of their disobedience, but also alludes to the deeper message of deliverance that will redeem humanity from estrangement and restore back the relationship with God and the rest of God's creative order.

B. On being disconnected

Have you ever had a time in your life when you felt disconnected from God and others? It happened to me in 1983 when my family decided to move from a place that I considered home for thirteen years. I can remember my struggle back then in trying to understand why we have to move to another neighborhood. I was also upset at my mom's brother who was the very reason why the family was selling the house. The day we moved was the day that I felt my whole world went crashing down on me. All of a sudden all of my connections and source of identity and support had been taken away from me. It was very clear to me that the next several days, months, and years of my life, would be a miserable time for me as I tried to settle to the new place, get used to the long commute that comes with moving to a faraway place, and get to know new people and places in my new community. It was essentially like having to start my life all over again. My experience reminded me of Ruth 1:20-21(NIV) which says, "Don't call me Naomi, Call me Mara, because the Almighty has made my life very bitter. I went away full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The Lord has afflicted me; the Almighty brought misfortune upon me." The story of Ruth shows how God restores families and communities. As the Scripture tells us, Naomi and her husband moved from Bethlehem to Moab. Moab had been Israel's adversary, but now, because of a food shortage in Israel, Naomi and her family decided to relocate there. Naomi's two sons married Moabite women and she started to have the extended family she'd missed in Bethlehem. After many years her husband and two

sons died. Like other Jewish women Naomi counted on her husband and then later her two sons to provide for her. Unlike today's modern women, she couldn't go out and find work and be independent. With her family shattered, she packed up her stuff to go back to her homeland. Her dreams of having a secure home and prosperous life were gone. Even worse, she wondered how she'd take care of herself.

Have you ever been in a dilemma where all the walls seem to close in around you and there is no place to go? There was another time in my life when I identified again with Naomi as I found myself moving again, this time to the United States to pursue God's calling on my life to become a pastor.

The year was 1991. In February of that year, my father and I were still mourning the loss of my mother who died of breast cancer some eight months before. Our life was slowly getting back to normal. Three months prior to that time my father and I visited my cousins in Singapore to celebrate Christmas and the New Year. Then the unthinkable happened. In mid-March, robbers broke into our home while the both of us were out. Since I was still at school due to finals week, it was just my dad who was at home to absorb the impact of our loss. This caused him to suffer a severe stroke. By the time I got home, it was too late. My dad was pronounced clinically dead by the time we brought him to the nearest hospital which was about 30 minutes from our house. After my father's death, as it did in 1983, my world fell into pieces once again. All of a sudden, I felt broken again and disconnected from God and life as my source of identity, provision, and protection. All had been taken away from me again. Then after a few months, I received an unusual calling from God that came through my mom's younger sister to consider going to seminary in the United States and become a United Methodist pastor. At that time, I didn't know what to think. I was still mourning the loss of my dad and what was left of my

world. I was still trying to figure out how I was going to survive not having my dad around to provide for me since I am an only child. I then asked myself, why would God move me to a new place again? Who will provide for me? Where will I find the resources to pay for my living expenses and education there? Will the United States consulate graciously give me a visa to travel?

C. The human need for connection

One of the things that was very significant during my time of crisis was my connection both to the church and the people in my community. The reality is people need to have a place where their spiritual and physical needs can be met. 2 Timothy 3:1 (NKJV) states, "...but know this, that in the last days perilous times will come." There is no denying that those times are here. More and more, kids are growing up in broken homes. Many community members are struggling to make ends meet in their everyday lives, and we feel the pinch of reality just like everyone else. Even believers are not exempt from the trials of the world. Sad to say, we are living in perilous and drastic times. Drastic times call for drastic measures. Small group communities where people can connect and share who they are and their needs to others need to be placed in churches. The church should always strive to meet the needs of people from all walks of life as it brings God's message of hope and salvation. The church should truly be about people.

One of the greatest lessons of meeting people's needs was shown when the Lord fed the four thousand (Mark 8:1-9). Jesus demonstrated by his deeds what the church ought to be in terms of purpose and function. Our Lord gave us an outline for how to successfully meet the needs of the people. Before Jesus gave the message, he fed them. They came to hear the Lord, and after giving them their physical food, he then gave them spiritual food to feed their souls.

For me it was the church that welcomed me and provided a space for me to connect with God and with others after the death of my dad. It was the church who gave me the opportunity to hear and experience God's message of love and hope that I was yearning for all this time. If it weren't for the church, I would have been lost in the world perhaps doing alcohol, drugs, and other bad things. This is the primary reason why I believe in the great possibilities that the church can do to provide meaningful relationships, connection, and support for the people in their neighborhood.

D. Life giving connection in the community and with the Divine

Making a difference in people's everyday lives will benefit the believer as well as the community. When the church is rooted deeply in its community, and its membership is operating as public servants, the church will impact the lives of the people and the believers will fulfill God's mission on earth as it is in heaven.

Here's an example of a church which is making such a difference. In the city of Compton lies Crossroads United Methodist Church. It is a church with a membership of a 100 and with an average age of 75. The church serves an area that has a membership of a million about 25 percent of which lives in poverty. This is twice the national average. The pastor of the church, the Rev. Adrianne Zackery, saw those numbers as a call from God. After attending the National Prayer Summit in Dallas, Texas, in 2014, Rev. Zackery started to collaborate with an attorney from her church to put together "expungement clinics" to help former incarcerated people seal their arrest records so that they can find employment and housing. Though her attorney member didn't know much about criminal law, she didn't say no to her pastor. Together they held their first meeting on a hot day in 2015 and had around a 100 people. It only took around four or five people to make it happen. "The 2014 National Prison Summit planted a seed," Rev. Zackery said. "Who would have thought that three years later we would be in Nashville, Tennessee,

sharing very concrete evidence of what it means to go beyond the local church,” she added. Rev. Zackery said any church can do the same thing. Every local church needs to take responsibility for other people coming back into their neighborhoods. “Even though there might be barriers, everyone in the congregation is able to do something,” she said. “Jesus is the answer.”³

E. The purpose of my research

For my research paper, I would like to explore ways to encourage apathetic members of the church to become compassionate about the community that surrounds the church. This is so important because we have been called to make disciples for Christ and also to serve those in need. In Matthew 25:35-36 (NRSV) Jesus calls us to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the estranged, clothe the naked, take care of the sick, and visit the incarcerated. Clearly it is necessary for members of the Body of Christ (Church) to connect and create a meaningful relationship with the people that surround the church. One method for engaging church members in the practices that Jesus calls for is increasing their capacity for compassion. In my study, I will engage ten individuals in doing daily contemplative practices for a week to test whether or not these practices can increase their ability to extend compassion to others. Frank Rogers in his article “Compassion-Based Practices of Personal and Social Restoration” shows that practice of compassion is both personally and socially restorative.⁴ If it can be shown that contemplative practices enhance an individual’s capacity for compassion, then it will be clear that churches can improve their potential for impacting their neighbors and bringing them into a relationship with

³ Kathy L. Gilbert, “Small church helps ex-offenders return to society,” *UM News*, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://www.umnews.org/en/news/small-church-helps-ex-offenders-return-to-society>.

⁴ Frank Rogers, “Compassion-Based Practices of Personal and Social Restoration,” *Practical Matters*, 5 (Spring 2012): 3, <http://practicalmattersjournal.org/2012/03/01/compassion-based-practices>.

Jesus Christ.

In the Bible, it says we are created in the “image of God” (Genesis 3:2). This means that, since our God is a relational God, we too are relational beings. This means that we are created with this relational likeness and longing for a relational connection because God exists in a relational love. God created and designed us to be dependent on one another. God designed us to give and receive from one another. The church is called then to be in a relational connection with its community. Members are called to be engaged with the people in and around the church. Unfortunately, Wilmington FUMC did not live to these ideals.

For fourteen years, I was the pastor of a predominantly Filipino United Methodist Church in Wilmington, California. In my years with them, I did not see any interest in the church membership to genuinely connect with the immediate community. This topic is important because we are seeing a trend in churches, including my former parish, where a significant number of their members no longer live within their immediate area. This minimizes the likelihood or interest of these individuals in investing their time and energy to get to know their neighborhood and their needs thus impairing the church’s ability to witness to their faith and provide ministry for their immediate community. My task is to discover spiritual and contemplative practices that can help church members cultivate compassion and to figure out ways to monitor how they are affected by such practices.

I personally believe that as followers of Christ we are called to be compassionate in our daily walk with God and each other. Each day, we see people who are in need. We hear about them on the television or the internet and meet them in our schools and communities, and more. Yet in today’s world, it becomes easy to consider those people invisible. The question is: can those feelings change? Can the regular exercise of spiritual or contemplative practices help

change the attitude in people in terms of how they view others? The Bible is clear in saying that we can't change ourselves because of our sinful nature. Romans 3:23 (NKJV) says "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Therefore, only the Holy Spirit can transform human hearts and lives. As followers of Christ, we know that God continues an ongoing work to mold us in the image and heart of Jesus. There is no doubt in my mind that God has the power to transform us. God is unwavering in His ability to change lives and desire to do so. And so, if someone is struggling with the ugliness of sin in his/her life, there is hope in Jesus.

Looking at the Scriptures, there are at least seven passages in the Bible that allude to this desired transformation. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 (RSV) it says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold the new has come." In Ezekiel 36:26 (ESV) it says "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from the flesh from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." Romans 12:2 (ESV) says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Philippians 1:6 (ESV) says, "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." Luke 6:43-45 (ESV) states, "For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." In Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV) the Psalmist writes, "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." And in Jeremiah 32-38-40 (ESV), the prophet writes, "And they shall be my

people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts that they may not turn from me.”

I. Migration as a Major Factor Affecting Churches

One of the most significant issues confronting churches in Southern California is the demographic changes in their communities. The large number of immigrants in the communities of Southern California is having a momentous impact on society. The churches in the communities affected by this shift in demographics are struggling to connect with the new members of their communities. Many of these immigrants come without a faith background or one that is different than Christianity. For followers of Christ to reach out to them they must understand the nature of immigration and be willing to practice compassion for them. Beginning with an exploration of biblical accounts of migration, I will show why migration is such an important issue for churches to deal with.

A. Migration as part of the human experience

In an article, Rev. Joan M. Maruskin wrote that the Bible “begins with the migration of God’s Spirit and ends with John in exile on the Isle of Patmos.”⁵ Furthermore, Maruskin added that between these two events, God’s people who have been displaced have continuously sought “safety”, “sanctuary”, and “refuge” and in light of these life events, God has given directions as

⁵ Joan M. Maruskin, “The Bible as the Ultimate Immigration Handbook: Written by, for, about migrants, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers,” CWS Immigration and Refugee Program (2006): 1, accessed October 30, 2018, https://www.greatplainsumc.org/files/ministries/mj_bible_immigration_handbook.pdf.

to how to welcome the stranger.⁶ The bottom line is that we are all part of God's great plan of migration. A great number of people have either migrated or can trace their family's beginnings to ancestors moving from one place to another. As a matter of fact, if we accept Adam and Eve as our ancestral parents, we are all migrants in a strange land and have felt estranged because of this. As an immigrant myself, I can't help but identify with these new people who are populating our communities. These are the people who, like most of us, have moved to different places, for one reason or another; most often so that they can provide a better life for themselves and/or their families. Therefore, the story of humankind has always been a story of migration. We are all, or have been, wanderers, immigrants, seekers of asylum, and refugees. As descendants of the first man and woman who lived on this earth, we trace our roots back the Garden of Eden. God brought Adam and Eve into being. God then gave instructions as to how to live in this space created by God. Unfortunately, humankind did not follow God's leading and this caused their untimely exile from the Garden (Genesis 4:8-16). Following their departure from the Garden, God provided "sewed skins" to "cover" and "protect" Adam and Eve from the elements. It is interesting to note that God's concern for the estranged moving around the world starts at this point and continues throughout the scripture.

The migration story continued with Noah. As humankind spread throughout the earth, the population became corrupt and filled with violence. God planned to have a great flood that would wipe out all humanity except for a small remnant. At age 500, Noah was called by God to continue the human race by building an ark and by filling the vessel with two of every kind of creature with the help of his family. The account found in Genesis 6:5 to 8:22 clearly shows that Noah was forced to leave their land because of the upcoming great flood. Noah and his family

⁶ Maruskin, 1.

became migrants who did not have a clue where they are going to end up. When their boat landed they were blessed by God and were told to “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1b, ESV). Later on, the scripture tells us that through Noah’s three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) and their wives the whole earth was repopulated.

Another migration story can be found in the life of Abraham and Sarah. Early on, they were known as Abram and Sarai. They, together with Terah (Abram’s father), and his brother’s son Lot settled in the land of Haran. It is there that God told Abram to “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1, ESV). This account in Genesis clearly points out that God instructed Abram to migrate just as today, the voice of God continues to direct people to pathways of migration and immigration. In the later chapters of the book of Genesis, we see the names of Abram and Sarai being changed to Abraham and Sarah. In Genesis 18:1-8 we find God appearing to Abraham in the person of three strangers near the oaks at Mamre. Eventually, Abraham offers his three guests, or perhaps strangers, hospitality as he referred to them as “my Lord” and as he gave them the best of what he had to offer. This is the first biblical reference of an ideal inclusive hospitality of giving the very best to the estranged who in this story turned out to be God.

The biblical migration continued with the life of Joseph. Joseph was the son of Jacob and Rachel. Known as the “righteous one,” he was favored by his father who gave him a special colored coat. Due to envy Joseph was sold by his brothers to Egypt where he eventually became the second most powerful man in the region, second only to Pharaoh. Issues of slavery and human trafficking have been a part of Joseph’s story. Joseph overcame the circumstances that forced him into the life of slavery. He had an opportunity to get back at his brothers for selling him into slavery. Instead of striking back, Joseph followed God’s directive to care for strangers

by offering inclusive hospitality and welcomed the estranged by giving them grain and resources before sending them back home.

Additionally, there was the story of Moses. The story in the book of Exodus is the narrative of the movement of God's people from injustice and slavery to freedom and new life. Scholars have branded this account as the world's best migration story. The book of Exodus began with the oppression of the Hebrew people. Their mistreatment intensified with the King of Egypt ordering all newborn Hebrew boys to be killed. Despite that, Moses was protected and hidden until he was three months old, at which time, he was placed in a basket and was eventually adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter as her own son. Though Moses was living in royalty and affluence he was deeply affected by the mistreatment of his people. Responding to this injustice, he killed an Egyptian which caused him to become a criminal alien leading him to flee to the land of Midian. During his stay, Moses married Zipporah and was called by God to return to Egypt to liberate God's people. Despite Moses having doubts as to how he could possibly do this, God answered his question when he said, "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:1-12, ESV). In the book of Exodus, God migrated with the Hebrew people thus showing us that indeed God is a migrant moving with God's people. God traveled with the people and continues to travel with migrants today.

Of course, humanity's story of migration will not be complete without mentioning the story of God's son, Jesus Christ. It was said that his story is that of an alien. An alien is a word that has become offensive to many as the term pertains to someone who has come from outer space. However, perhaps, he may have been from outer space since he came from heaven and took the form of a human being to become somewhat of an immigrant Christ to whom we all owe our salvation. Jesus was born in a little town in Bethlehem to which his parents, Mary and

Joseph, took a trip because of a taxation decree given by the governor Quirinius. Scripture states that the Christ child was born in a manger. News regarding his birth was given first to the shepherds who were considered to be the lowest on the economic scale. They too were considered migrants as they moved and lived with their flocks. At the birth of Jesus, there were also Wise Men from the East, who were perhaps astrologers from Persia, Babylon, or Arabia who came to town to see the “child who has been born King of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2, NRSV). The gospel of Luke tells us that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph lingered in Bethlehem until Jesus’ dedication in the temple in Jerusalem and then returned to Nazareth. The writer of Matthew also mentions that they stayed in Bethlehem until the visit of the Wise men. It was estimated that Jesus was about two years old at that time. Once the Wise Men left, an angel appeared before Joseph saying in a dream, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him. Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and they went to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt I have called my son’” (Matthew 2:13-15, NRSV). In a sense, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph became seekers of safe haven in Egypt. With very little to go by they crossed the border, looking for shelter and sanctuary. Although they were strangers, someone took them in. Someone welcomed them and protected while they made Egypt their home.

B. Factors of migration

The United States is a nation founded by immigrants from other lands near and far. It was said that the U.S. is a melting pot of different ethnic groups that have come together as American citizens. What factors have driven people over the years to leave their respective countries to come to America? Experts say this immigration phenomenon is caused by push-pull factors.

Asians are among the biggest groups who migrated to the United States, particularly California. In an article in the *Journal of Sociology & Welfare*, John K. Matsouka and Donald H. Ryujin wrote that, according to the 1980 census, the Japanese, Filipinos, and Chinese were the most “populous” Asian-Pacific ethnic groups in the United States.⁷ It was also said that between the three people groups it was the Chinese who first came to America, followed by the Japanese and then the Filipinos.⁸

Despite their common goal to migrate to the United States each people group has different reasons to want to journey to America.

The article mentions that the majority of the first immigrants from China came to the United States from 1850 to 1964 with the “discovery of gold in California” and a “national catastrophe” as sole motivators for some 300,000 Chinese people to leave their villages and move to America.⁹ It was also said that these immigrants were mostly young men who intended to stay temporarily in the U.S. long enough to earn monies and then return back to their motherland. Most of them worked as field hands and domestics as they performed needed services and contributed significantly in the completion of the transcontinental railroad. Since many of them viewed their stay in the United States as temporary they did not attempt to affect the social and political factor of this country.¹⁰

The first Japanese immigrants came to the U.S. in the late 1800s. It was at this time that the Japanese government was trying to industrialize their country in order to compete with the Western world. The country’s shift from an agrarian to an industrial focus on the economy

⁷ John K. Matsouka and Donald H. Ryujin, “Asian American Immigrants: A Comparison of the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos,” *The Journal of Sociology & Welfare* 18, no. 3, (1991): 123, <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1992&context=jssw>.

⁸ Matsouka and Ryujin, 123.

⁹ Matsouka and Ryujin, 123.

¹⁰ Matsouka and Ryujin, 124.

caused a lot of social unrest and unemployment. This pushed a lot of the Japanese to seek for a better life abroad. More than enough employment opportunities welcomed these first Japanese immigrants as they worked in agriculture, mining, lumbering, canning, and in the railroad industries. The onset of World War II changed the lives of a lot of Japanese people in the United States because of their forced internment. This was particularly true on the West Coast, as they sold their homes, businesses and possessions. Others sold their goods or left their belongings in locked homes hoping that they would be safe until they return. Many of the farmers were forced to abandon their fields in which their life's savings were invested. There were 2,300 of the 110,000 evacuees who asked to be sent back to Japan. And those who chose to stay believed that they must prove their loyalty to the U.S. and vindicate themselves and their people by enlisting themselves in Armed Forces.¹¹

For the Filipinos the main reason for migrating to America is purely economic. They want to avail the economic opportunities in the United States. Like previous immigrants before them, these young Filipino men and women held dreams of gathering great wealth and bringing those back to their families in the Philippines. A common practice among Filipinos is for a family to mortgage part of their land in order to send a family member to the United States. In time, that family member would eventually send money home to pay off the mortgage or debt, or even help out a younger family member finish their schooling. Like previous Asian groups, the dreams and expectations of these Filipinos rarely materialize. Instead, they find themselves staying longer in America. Many of them refuse to return home as they will be deemed failures. One of the main opportunities for the first Filipino migrants happened when a restriction was placed in the immigration of Japanese people. This situation created a void in the labor needs in

¹¹ Matsouka and Ryujin, 127.

the fields and orchards in both California and Hawaii, and in the salmon canneries in the Pacific Northwest. The second wave of Filipino migrants came after the 1965 revision of the immigration laws which saw the coming of well-educated and highly skilled professional men and women. It was said that upon their arrival many of the Filipinos found themselves “underemployed” as they were not allowed to use their skills and training as companies refused to “recognize” their “credentials” and “qualifications.”¹²

C. **Places in Southern California where migration is happening**

Latinos have always been the largest of all the people groups to affect the landscape of California. In his article, “It’s official: Latinos now outnumber whites in California,” Javier Panzer states that, according to demographers, in 2014 Latinos has surpassed whites as the “largest ethnic group” in California.¹³ It was said that in July 1, 2014 around 14.99 million Latinos resided in California, surpassing the 14.92 million Caucasians in the state.¹⁴ This change does not come as a surprise. State demographers had predicted this change would happen. Because of this shift, California is now the first large state where Caucasians are not a majority, and the third state overall, after Hawaii and New Mexico, without a white majority. Furthermore, it was said that the country’s Latino population has grown to 55.4 million with California and Los Angeles County having the largest Latino population. In addition, the Latino population is relatively young, with a median age of about 29, as compared to 45 for the aging white population. It was said that pretty soon California will be comprised of 49% Latino.

¹² Matsouka and Ryujin, 128.

¹³ Javier Panzar and Javier Panzar, “It’s official: Latinos now outnumber whites in California,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 2015, accessed November 7, 2018, <http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-census-latinos-20150708-story.html>.

¹⁴ Panzar and Panzar, 2.

The Hispanic community is one of the fastest growing communities in America in the last decade. According to the most recent surveys there are now some 6.3 million more Hispanics living in the United States than in the year 2010. How does the increase impact California? Which cities in California have seen the greatest increase in their Hispanic population? A website titled “These Are The 10 California Cities With The Largest Hispanic Population For 2018” gives the answer to this question.¹⁵

According to the census Mendota took the top spot for the highest percentage of Hispanic population in California for the year 2018. It has a Hispanic population of 11,224 and a 98.68% rate.

The city of Maywood is next with a Hispanic population of 27,094 or 97.91 Hispanic percentage. Maywood is a small city in the southwest part of Los Angeles County. With its 1.18 square miles it is considered the third smallest incorporated city in Los Angeles County and it has the highest proportion of Latinos, immigrants, and undocumented immigrants in the county.

Third on the list is Huron. It has an Hispanic population of 6,676, a 97.8 Hispanic percentage. Huron is a small city located in Fresno County. It is said that during the harvest season the population balloons to 15,000 due to the influx of migrant farm workers. Huron was the city with the highest proportion of Hispanic or Latino people in the United States according to the census made in the year 2000.

The city of Parlier is number four with a Hispanic population of 14,580 and a Hispanic percentage of 97.51.

¹⁵ Chris Kolmar, “These Are The 10 California Cities With The Largest Hispanic Population For 2018,” *HomeSnacks*, accessed November 7, 2018, <http://www.homesnacks.net/most-hispanic-cities-in-california-1210751/>.

This is followed by Coachella with a Hispanic population of 42,725 and a Hispanic percentage of 97.49. Coachella is a city in Riverside County. This city is found in the easternmost part of a region collectively called the Coachella Valley. It is about 28 miles east of Palm Springs and 72 miles east of Riverside, and 130 miles east of the city of Los Angeles.

Number six goes to Calexico. It has a Hispanic population of 38,661 and a Hispanic percentage of 97.26. Calexico is located in Imperial County, California. The city is about 122 miles east of San Diego and 62 miles west of Yuma, Arizona. The name of the city is a compound word for California and Mexico which emphasizes its identity as a border city.

Number seven is Huntington Park. It has a Hispanic population of 57,214 and a Hispanic percentage of 97.1. Huntington Park is a city in the Gateway Cities of the southeastern part of Los Angeles County.

The city of Cudahy is number eight. It has a Hispanic population of 23,170 with a Hispanic percentage of 96.12. Cudahy is located in the southeastern part of the Los Angeles County. In terms of its area, it is the second smallest city in the Los Angeles County after Hawaiian Gardens.

Orange Cove is number nine. It has a Hispanic population of 9,154 with a Hispanic percentage of 95.69. Orange Cove is a city located in Fresno County. The city has grown its population from 7,722 in 2010. Almost all of Orange Cove's residents are Hispanic. They are comprised mostly of farmers, about one third of whom are not American citizen and come from Latin America. The city is located in the San Joaquin Valley, eight miles east southeast of Reedley.

Number ten is the city of Commerce. It has a Hispanic population of 12,411 and Hispanic percentage of 95.49. Commerce is a city located in the southeast portion of the Los Angeles

County. The city is bordered by Vernon on the west, Los Angeles on the northwest, East Los Angeles on the north, Montebello on the east, Downey and Bell Gardens on the south, and Maywood on the southwest. The city of Commerce is served by the Long Beach (405) and the Santa Ana (91) Freeways as well as the Metrolink rail service. It is usually referred to as the City of Commerce to differentiate it from the common noun.

Asians are considered the minority of the minority. There are about 17 million people who identify themselves as Asians living in the United States, making up about 5.6 percent of the total population. In California alone there are 5,280,818 or 13.7 percent of the total population of the state. Unlike other people groups that falls under one group in the Census, Asian Americans have several sub-groups, Chinese, Filipino, and Indian being the three largest of the sub-groups.

So which cities and towns in California have seen the greatest increase in their Asian population? This question is answered in a website titled “10 Cities In California With The Largest Asian Population For 2018.”¹⁶

First on the list is the city of Milpitas. It has an Asian population of 49,305 and a percentage of 28.02. This city is bordered by San Jose on its south, Fremont on its north, State Route 237 on its east, and generally between Interstates 680 and 880 which runs north and south through the city. Milpitas is also located within Silicon Valley where the headquarters and offices of Maxtor, LSI Corporation, Adaptec, Intersil, FireEye, Viavi and Lumentum, KLA-Tencor, SanDisk, and View, Inc., Flex, and Cisco can be found.

Second on the list is Cupertino. It has an Asian population of 39,998 and percentage of 66.33. Cupertino is a city located in the Santa Clara County. It is situated west of San Jose on the

¹⁶ Niko Jamison, “10 Cities In California With The Largest Asian Population For 2018,” *HomeSnacks*: 5-14, accessed November 7, 2018, <http://www.homesnacks.net/most-asian-cities-in-california-1214556/>.

western edge of the Santa Clara Valley. Forbes magazine ranked the city as one of the most educated small towns as its public schools rank highly in the country. Cupertino is also known as the home of the corporate headquarters of Apple Inc.

Third on the list is Monterey Park. It has an Asian population of 39,581 and a percentage of 64.89. It is known as a hillside suburban city in the County of Los Angeles. It is located 7 miles east of the city of Los Angeles. A majority of its Asian residents are of Chinese descent. The city has the largest concentration of Chinese Americans of any municipality in the entire country. In 2017 the city was recognized as one of “America’s Best Places to Live 2017.”

Number four is the city of Walnut. It has an Asian population of 18,917 and a percentage of 63. The city of Walnut is a suburban city in the eastern part of the County of Los Angeles. The city has earned distinction as one of Money magazine’s “Best Places to Live” ranked number seven in 2009 and number fifty-seven in 2011.

Fifth on the list is the city of San Gabriel. The city has an Asian population of 24,532 and a percentage of 61.02. The city of San Gabriel is located in Los Angeles County. It is named after the Mission San Gabriel Arcángel founded by Junipero Serra. The city was incorporated in 1913. It was said that the city is the birthplace of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

Number six on the list is the city of Cerritos. It has an Asian population of 30,177 and a percentage of 60.6. The city of Cerritos was formerly known as the “Dairy Valley” because of the prevalence of dairy farms in the area. It is a suburban city in Los Angeles County, and it is one of several cities that make up the Gateway Cities of southeast Los Angeles County. The city was incorporated in 1956.

The city of Rosemead ranks number seven on the list. It has an Asian population of 32,656 and a percentage of 59.91. The city of Rosemead is located in Los Angeles County. The

city is part of a cluster of cities together with Arcadia, Temple City, Monterey Park, San Marino, and San Gabriel with a fast growing Asian population.

Temple City is number eight on the list. It has an Asian population of 21,508 and a percentage of 59.83. The city is located in Los Angeles County. Temple City is part of a cluster of cities, together with Arcadia, Rosemead, Monterey Park, San Marino, and San Gabriel with a rapidly growing Asian population. The city also has a mixture of Cuban and Puerto Rican communities. In addition, Caucasians makes up one third of city's population.

The city of Arcadia is number nine on the list. It has an Asian population of 34,035 with a percentage of 58.93. Arcadia is located in Los Angeles County. It is about thirteen miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles and located at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains. The city is the home to the Santa Anita Park racetrack and to the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden. The city is named after Arcadia, Greece.

Number ten is Daly City. The city has an Asian population of 59,613 and a percentage of 56.48. Daly City is the largest city in the county of San Mateo. It is located south of the city of San Francisco. The city is named in honor of businessman and landowner John Donald Daly.

D. Effects of migration on society

Like any human experience immigration has both positive and negative effects on the lives of immigrants and the community that they live in. In his article, *The Impact of Immigration to California*, Steven A. Camarota states that “migration to California in recent years has been unprecedented.”¹⁷ Between the years of 1965 and 1995 the number of people who migrated to the state increased six-fold from 1.3 million to eight million.¹⁸ It's interesting to note

¹⁷ Steven A. Camarota, “The Impact of Immigration on California,” *Center for Immigration Studies* (July 1, 1998): 2, <https://cis.org/Report/Impact-Immigration-California>.

¹⁸ Camarota, 2.

that in 1995 California's immigrant percentage outdid the rest of the country: Mexican and Central America (50 percent in CA vs. 23 percent nationwide); Asians (33 percent vs. 21 percent); Illegal Aliens (20 percent vs. 14 percent); amnesty recipients (19 percent vs. 7 percent); and refugees (9 percent vs. 6 percent).¹⁹ It was also noted that in the 1950's half of California's immigrant population came from either Europe or Canada with the remainder coming from Mexico. By the 1990's the number of European and Canadian immigrants dropped significantly to less than ten percent, and the number of immigrants from Mexico and Central America had climbed up to well over half of the total number. In addition, California's Asian immigrants had doubled in number and now account for forty percent of new immigrants in the state. These numbers now contribute to the uniqueness of the state of California as being the most "racially" and "ethnically" diverse state in the entire country.²⁰

So, what does this mean? According to Franklin J. James, Jeff A. Romine, and Peter E. Zwanzig, in their article *The Effects of Immigration on Urban Communities*, the number of immigrants (both legal and illegal) arriving today are the same as those back in the early twentieth century, illegal immigration has multiplied, and the face of the immigrants today are more likely nonwhite, lack basic English skills, and are coming from non affluent parts of the world.²¹

One misconception about immigration is that people tend to think of immigrants as those who take away the earnings and job opportunities from low-skilled native workers. However,

¹⁹ Camarota, 2.

²⁰ Camarota, 2.

²¹ James J. Franklin, Jeff A. Romaine, and Peter E. Zwanzig, "The Effects of Immigration on Urban Communities," *Cityscapes: A Journal of Policy Development and Research* 3, no. 3 (1998): 171.

studies have shown no evidence that immigrant people displace natives from work or reduce earnings of the average American worker.

One constructive thing about immigrants is their positive impact on the labor markets. For example, the restaurant business is one of the major employers of immigrants. Back in the 1980's immigrants constituted twenty-five percent of the New York City's population and fifty-four percent of its restaurant workers. In addition, immigrants owned sixty percent of the restaurant business in New York. It was said that restaurants are attractive opportunities to business minded immigrants since small restaurants can begin with little capital and with the labor of unpaid family members. With this access to low-cost labor, restaurants owned by immigrants can match the prices at fast food places while offering a much more wide-ranging menu. Immigrants definitely create jobs by providing low-cost labor which in turn stimulates certain industries.

In addition to their impact in low-wage industries (i.e. apparel manufacturing and restaurants), immigrant service workers played a supporting role in maintaining business services and office industries in large cities. Also, these immigrants stimulated the import and export activities, and maintained the international financial relationships with their home nations. An example of this would be the presence of Philippine businesses (i.e. Philippine grocery stores or markets) and offices (i.e. Philippine banks) in bigger cities like Los Angeles, Carson, and West Covina where Philippine products and services are made available to address the needs of the Filipino community.

Another sector that offered good opportunities for immigrants is construction. It is said that construction offered many employment opportunities to immigrants in non-unionized areas. The industry hired both very high and low-skilled people.

One more industry that benefited from the coming of immigrants is healthcare. The field hired many low-skilled workers who provide personal care to patients, housekeeping, and janitorial services. Because healthcare is expensive it often requires health insurance to be affordable to people. Immigrants have stimulated the economy of this industry on the supply side, and yet they are less likely to use these services as much as natives do.

Another thing that the immigrants brought to their new community was their ability to bring products and services from their former home to their new home. Recently, immigrants to New York have facilitated the development of foreign banks and other institutions, enhancing the ability of that city to play a leading role in executing global trade. It was said that in the nineteenth century, early Chinese migrants to California generated trade in rice, silk, opium, dried seafood, handicrafts and other goods. Over time immigrants little by little increase the number of products that they export to their home countries. A spike in trade always happens since immigrants encourage import of goods from home that they have not tasted in a while.

Immigration definitely contributed to the emergence of many multiethnic neighborhoods throughout the United States. This is due to the influx of new Hispanic and Asian immigrants. This trend had caused a significant effect on the housing market in larger cities of the country.

One of the cities in Southern California that changed its complexion due to immigration is San Marino. It was said that generations ago whites made up roughly two thirds of the population in this high scale Los Angeles suburb where most of the homes cost more than a million dollars. Now, Asians make up over half of the population of this small city. According to Jennifer Medina's 2013 New York Times article the transformation of the city shows a "drastic

shift in California immigration trends over the last decade.”²² Immigrants, particularly Asians, are definitely changing the landscape of America. In places such as the San Gabriel Valley, Orange Country, and Silicon Valley in Northern California, Asian immigrants have become a “dominant cultural force in places that were once largely white or Hispanic.”²³ Demographer Hans Johnson commented that, “We are really looking at a different era here.”²⁴ Asians have definitely become the majority in more than half a dozen cities in the San Gabriel Valley in the last ten years, establishing a region of Asian-dominated suburbs that stretches for nearly 30 miles east of Los Angeles.

Another city that has been attracting a lot of Asian immigrants is the city of Monterey Park. It was said that such was not the case a generation ago. It is apparent now that Asians have moved into some of the most exclusive cities in the Los Angeles County so much so that they now make up more than sixty percent of the population in the area.

Interestingly enough, many of the immigrants that come here are from China and Taiwan. These Asians have worked hard and have eagerly bought property in places like San Marino, where the median price is nearly twice that of Beverly Hills and is home to one of the highest performing school districts in the state of California. Because of these changes in population the local library now offers story time in Mandarin. Demographer for Asian Pacific American Legal Center, Daniel Ichinose, states, “This is kind of ground zero for new immigrant America.”²⁵ Ichinose continues, “You have people speaking Mandarin and Vietnamese and Spanish all living

²² Jennifer Medina, “New Suburban Dream Born of Asia and Southern California,” *The New York Times* (April 28, 2013): 1, accessed November 2, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/29/us/asians-now-largest-immigrant-group-in-southern-california.html>.

²³ Medina, 1.

²⁴ Medina, 1.

²⁵ Medina, 3.

together and facing many common challenges.”²⁶ It’s interesting that the children of the immigrants who began transforming the area a generation ago are beginning to come of age and are becoming vocal supporters for the region, running for public office and establishing businesses that accommodate an American-born audience.

As you pass by these fast-growing areas you will notice numerous stores that show signs in Mandarin, sell restaurant supplies and Chinese herbs or promote acupuncture. But perhaps the most popular storefront among Asian entrepreneurs is the boba tea shop, where large numbers of young people spend hours drinking cold milk tea with jelly-like tapioca balls. The emergence of this so called “boba life” has surely created a local ethnic pride that would have been unimaginable a generation ago. Who would have thought that the San Gabriel Valley could be the center of some kind of a cultural movement or identity is mind boggling as they try to assert cultural capital to create Asian-American identity that was not there before.

II. The Church’s Role in Fostering Connection with the Community

A. God as a missional God

One of the biggest themes in the whole of Scripture is mission. This is reflected on the concept of a God who “sends.”²⁷ When we think about the attributes of God, we most often think about God’s characteristics of holiness, sovereignty, wisdom, justice, grace, love and so forth, rarely do we think of God’s missionary nature. But the Bible teaches that God is a missional God—a sending God; that God is not just one who sends, but also one who was sent. Scripture tells us that God the Father sent both God the Son and God the Holy Spirit to be with us. In John 20:21 (NRSV), it says, “Jesus said to them again ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me,

²⁶ Medina, 3.

²⁷ Ferris L. McDaniel, “Mission in the Old Testament,” quoted in *Mission in the New Testament*, eds. William J. Larkin Jr. and Joel F. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 11.

even so I am sending you.” In John 14:26 (ESV), it also says, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.” Look at the event of the incarnation of Christ being sent into the world, putting on human flesh to live among us. That He might live, die, and rise for the salvation of humankind portrays the essence of what it truly means to be missional. God the Son being sent as the message Himself cannot get any more missional. God’s missional character is not that God waits for us to come to Godself, but rather God lovingly and graciously comes to us. Through these instances God models to us who God is—a God on a mission.

Ferris L. McDaniel portrays this in his book *Mission in the New Testament: An Evangelical Approach*. He further states that both the Greek word “apostello” and Hebrew term “salah” had multiple occurrences in the Scripture implying the thought of sending while having God as its subject.²⁸ To understand this thought McDaniel also argues that we must divide this in two parts, the first part parallels between the “secular” use of human sending (salah) and divine sending; and then, the second, examines the divine sending in the Old Testament by showing the story of God’s work of sending.²⁹

B. Biblical perspectives on mission and outreach

McDaniel notes that the first feature in sending is the sender’s “purpose to do something.”³⁰ The movement of sending is said to be a product of the senders (God) will; and that there is a connection between human sending (salah) and accomplishing the will of the sender (God). In Genesis 22:10, Abraham reaches for the knife to fulfill God’s wishes of completing Abraham’s sacrifice (of his son Isaac). In Genesis 8:9, Noah reaches outside to

²⁸ Larkin and Williams, 11.

²⁹ Larkin and Williams, 12.

³⁰ Larkin and Williams, 12.

receive the dove into the ark. And in Judges 15:15, Samson found a donkey's "jawbone" to slay a thousand men. These accounts clearly indicate the movement of "sending" as a "purposeful act,"³¹ Another term that was used to illustrate the performing of God's will is the phrase "stretches out his hand."³² In Exodus 3:20 God will do this to force Pharaoh to let God's people leave the land. In the same manner, it was God's outstretched hand that touched the prophet Jeremiah's lips so that God can place words in Jeremiah's mouth in order that he can be commissioned to be God's spokesperson (Jeremiah 1:9). In all of this, you can see the stretching out God's hands as a "graphic metaphorical picture of action" fulfilling the will of God.³³

A second expression that shows the connection of sending with the will of the sender, though rare in occurrence, and, used in the context of an enemy, is the term "sending fire" or setting fire to a foe's defenses. In this case, the enemy purposefully destroys his foes (Judges 20:48; 2 Kings 8:12; and Psalm 74:7). At times, the Lord sends his fiery arrows against the enemies of Israel (Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12; and 2:2, and 5) and His servant David's enemies (2 Samuel 22:15, and Psalm 74:7). The Lord also stretched his hand to portray the rescue of the Psalmist.³⁴

An additional observation seen in biblical writings in the hundreds of "secular" sending is the emphasis on "authority" given to the sending party. In its three hundred occurrences, it is a judge or a person with rank (i.e. a king) who does the sending. In numerous occasions a nuance of "command" or "give orders that/to" would be the satisfactory translation.³⁵ This authority is seen in the account of the sending of spies (Numbers 13:2,3; Deuteronomy 1:22; Joshua 2:1; and

³¹ Larkin and Williams, 13.

³² Larkin and Williams, 13.

³³ Larkin and Williams, 13.

³⁴ Larkin and Williams, 13.

³⁵ Larkin and Williams, 13.

1 Samuel 26:4). It can also be seen in the removal of Abram and Sarai (Genesis 12:20) from Egypt, and in the sending of Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23).

Furthermore, it was also said that the sending in the Scriptures is seen as an expression of the will of an authority figure (God), and that there is often reluctance on the part of the one sent to obey. There are several of examples of men who were hesitant to be sent by God. In Exodus 4:13, Moses wishes that someone else be sent to Pharaoh to bring God's people out of Egypt. Likewise, Jeremiah showed reluctance as he told God he wished to be sent no more than six times (Jeremiah 1:7; 19:14; 26:12, 15). He even tried to stifle the proclamation of the message and discovers that he could not do that (Jeremiah 20:9). In both of these instances it is evident that the "sending" of God is a "commission" that necessitates "obedience" from the one being sent.³⁶

Finally, it was also said of sending is that it involves the use of "messengers." Authority figures such as kings use "envoys" in the practice of diplomacy.³⁷ The sending of messengers from governors or kings is recorded in multiple occasions. For instance, in Numbers 20:14 and in Deuteronomy 2:26, Moses sends messengers to ask for passage. In Judges 7:24 Gideon calls for Israel by sending messengers.

All in all, the process of sending in the Old Testament often includes an authority figure commanding a subordinate. It is seen as an official act by which the intentions and desires of the sovereign are performed and communicated.

God who sent humankind from paradise and spread it all over the earth, also promised that all nations would be blessed through the seed of Abraham. This Sovereign Being continued to involve Himself with creation in order to complete His will. This participation is often

³⁶ Larkin and Williams, 15.

³⁷ Larkin and Williams, 15.

portrayed in the action of God's sending of the prophets, of the kings, and His only Son, Jesus Christ, and other messengers. Periodically, they announced a message of judgment and gloom, but it is God's pleasure to bring the message of salvation and hope to God's people. This will come to fruition once the Church, sent by God, accomplishes its mission.

C. The Great Commission: God's directive to the church

The Great Commission has been known to be the Lord's command to the church to proclaim the message of the Good News and to make disciples of the nations. This account has been written in all four gospels (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-49; and John 20:21-22) and in the book of Acts 1:8. The Great Commission is a charge to proclaim the gospel to every person, a mandate toward a movement of evangelizing the world, a divine authorization to be the Lord's representative to every place to all people. The task of evangelizing the world was given by Jesus to his disciples. It is especially emphasized in Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV):

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

This mandate from Jesus contains the following: the declaration of Christ's authority, the command to make disciples, and the promise of Jesus' presence with the disciples. Also, the Great Commission contains three commands, and the directive to make all the nations his disciples is the central command, the focus of Jesus' mission mandate.

Personally, I think the Great Commission is one of the most significant passages in the Bible. First, it is the last recorded personal instruction given by Jesus to His disciples. Second, it is a special calling from Christ to all his followers to take specific action while living on this earth. In this Great Commission Jesus calls every Christian, and people of the church, to step out in faith and spread the Good News. This is faith in action. People who obey this command change their

spiritual lives forever. This could mean sharing God’s message of love, hope, and grace to a neighbor or to a stranger who is passing through town. It could be sharing your resources and time with the less fortunate. Wherever we find ourselves every faithful Christian is compelled through obedience to share the good news of God. If you are a follower of Christ, where has he called you to go? Who has God put in your heart to share God’s gift of salvation? What large or small steps can we take to “make disciples of all nations?”

III. **Spiritual/Contemplative Practices**

A. **Who we are as humans and what is possible?**

Carol G. Stratton shared a Gaelic blessing that goes, “May those who love us, love us. And those that don’t love us, love us. May God turn their hearts and if He doesn’t turn their hearts, may He turn their ankle so we will know them by their limping.”³⁸ When I heard this for the first time I laughed hard. People want to be noticed, acknowledged, esteemed, and loved. It’s part of humanity’s DNA. It’s also part of our make-up to not be receptive or open to those who are different from us or those who we feel in opposition to what we stand for.

Dr. Alane Daugherty states, “...the reality is that most of us live our lives in constant reaction to the external world with all its challenges, pitfalls, and troubles feeling ungrounded and believing we have no other choice. Our fear response system dominates, and stress, anxiety and internal ‘unsettledness’ are ever present.”³⁹ Daugherty’s statement clearly demonstrates why it is that humans have so much trouble connecting with each other. Daugherty further states,

³⁸ Carol G. Stratton, *Changing Zip Codes* (Raleigh, NC: Lighthouse Publishing of the Carolinas, 2012), 85.

³⁹ Alane Daugherty, *From Mindfulness to Heartfulness* (Bloomington, IN: Balboa Press, 2014), 35.

“...two people can have a profoundly different perception, or inner response to the same experience, which then can deeply affect the way they are in the world.”⁴⁰

Dr. Frank Rogers supports these ideas and makes an even stronger statement when he says, “Wherever we turn, our mad rips our world apart. It tears us up through terrorist bombings and retaliatory attacks, school shootings and playground bullying, domestic abuse, gangland killings, and even molestations in our sacred institutions. Violence, racism, and poverty stalk our streets and ravage our families. Our madness knows no limits. And its blows can be brutal. Our mad infects our relationships as well. Between loved ones at home, colleagues at the work place, and adversaries dissenting in our political spaces, we witness cycles of rage, resentment, blame, and dismissiveness that erode the very bonds on which love and community depend.”⁴¹

The problem, though, is if we call ourselves followers of Christ, then we must learn to love our neighbors, the estranged, those who are different from us and even those who are in opposition to us.

B. The nature of spiritual/contemplative practices

Dr. Rogers shows the importance of spiritual and contemplative practices when he says, “Jesus’ spiritual path, at its essence entails the cultivation of compassion. It invites us to become ever more grounded in God’s expansive compassion, ever more restored in a self-compassion that tames our chaotic interior lives, and ever more fully an agent of care, a beacon of compassion within our bruised and battered world.”⁴²

In order to become an agent of care and a beacon of compassion one must be open to new perceptions and ways of dealing with the issues of the world and the people who we come in

⁴⁰ Daugherty, 37.

⁴¹ Frank Rogers Jr., *Compassion in Practice* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2016), 8-9.

⁴² Rogers Jr., 29.

contact with. Dr Daugherty says that humans are able to make adaptations that will allow us to be more compassionate. This must entail a conscious effort to change one's perspectives. She says people "...will continually adapt to any repeated experience, or internal state we expose them to. This is the cycle of adaptation, or 'spiral of becoming' ...it can lead us to heightened states of heartfelt awareness, and connection to our own deepest potential or Inner Being."⁴³

C. Spiritual/contemplative practices and their impact on compassion

(1) Introduction

In the experimentation part of my paper I explored ways to encourage disconnected members of the church to become compassionate about the community that surrounds the church. I found "A Loving-Kindness Meditation to Boost Compassion" created by Emma Sepala to be a useful tool to enhance one's compassion and decided to use it for my research paper. The goal of the experiment was to see if using such practices could help church members cultivate compassion and see how they are affected by such practices.⁴⁴

(2) Meditation or spiritual practices as a way to enhance compassion in people

It has been said that practicing meditation has its benefits. From the classroom to company board-rooms people believe in the power and benefits of some type of meditation in a person's life. In her article entitled *Can Meditation Lead to Lasting Change?*, Jill Suttie, stressed that meditation can increase a person's compassionate concern for others in addition to improving one's "resiliency to stress," boosting one's ability to focus and pay attention, helping a person feel lighter and less self-focused, and improving one's markers of health. In addition, Dr. Alane Daugherty states that change in one's capacity for compassion is possible provided

⁴³ Daugherty, 71.

⁴⁴ Emma Sepala, "A Loving-Kindness Meditation to Boost Compassion," *Greater Good Science Center*, March 31, 2016, accessed October 16, 2017, <https://www.mindful.org/a-loving-kindness-meditation-to-boost-compassion>.

that the person wanting to make a change is willing to “move beyond” his/her current form and by taking action to change.⁴⁵ Otherwise, things will remain the same. For Daugherty this starts with “cultivating awareness” where one uses his/her conscious attention to be mindful of their circumstance.⁴⁶ This mindfulness is aimed at developing a ‘non-reactive’ way of ‘observing’ or being with the current moment without developing any reactive interpretation, evaluation, or judgment. Daugherty contends that the more we can move away from these kinds of reactivity the more a person can easily keep a ‘grounded way of being’ which is the object of most spiritual/contemplative exercises.⁴⁷

(3) Review of literature related to spiritual/contemplative practices and its impact on compassion

As followers of Christ we are called to be compassionate in our daily walk with God and with each other. Each and every day we see people who are in need. We hear about them on the television or the internet, in our schools and communities, and more. Yet in today’s world, it becomes easy to consider those in need invisible. The question is: can those feelings change? Can the regular exercise of spiritual or contemplative practices help change the attitude in people in terms of how they view others?

Looking at the World Wide Web, I found several articles that support my premise. From the *Greater Good Magazine*, in her article “Meditation Makes Us Act with Compassion,” Emiliana R. Simon argues that people who engage in some form of meditation will have a much better chance of showing compassion to another person than those who don’t. She based her

⁴⁵ Daugherty, 101.

⁴⁶ Daugherty, 101.

⁴⁷ Daugherty, 102.

hypothesis on an experiment that was done with two groups of people. One group was instructed to do mindfulness meditation. In addition to doing the mindfulness meditation exercise, another group was also asked to hear a discussion on compassion and suffering. The experiment resulted in having fifty percent of both groups show compassion to other people. However, it didn't matter which group the people participated in. People from either group were equally likely to help. This proved to Simon that meditation, whether or not it explicitly focuses on compassion, significantly increases compassionate behavior in people.⁴⁸

In another article, "Guide to Cultivating Compassion to Your Life, With 7 Practices," Leo Babauta articulates that compassion can be cultivated through seven compassionate practices such as Morning Ritual (greeting each morning with a ritual), Empathy Practice (developing empathy for fellow human beings), Commonalities Practice (recognizing our similarities with others), Relief of Suffering Practice (wanting the other person to be free from suffering), Act of Kindness Practice (imagining you are the one going through that suffering), Those Who Mistreat Us Practice (understanding the action of those who mistreated us as this is not about you but about the other person is going through), and Evening Routine (taking the time to reflect on your day before retiring for the night).⁴⁹

In another article, "What Neuroscience Can Teach us About Compassion," Carolyn Gregoire points out the secret as to how one can increase one's capacity for compassion. She said, "We can increase integration in the brain through mindfulness and compassion practices,

⁴⁸ Emiliana Simon, "Meditation Makes Us Act with Compassion," *Greater Good Magazine*, accessed October 20, 2017, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/meditation_causes_compassionate_action.

⁴⁹ Leo Babauta, "Guide to Cultivating Compassion to Your Life, With 7 Practices," accessed October 31, 2017, <https://zenhabits.net/a-guide-to-cultivating-compassion-in-your-life-with-7-practices/>.

and by increasing integration, we naturally become mindful and compassionate.”⁵⁰

Finally, in his article, “Growing Your Compassion Circle,” Richard Davidson articulates that compassion has the ability to alter our societies and is believed to be vital to the survival of the human species. Compassion needs to be developed. To widen the scope of compassion it needs to be treated like any language—it necessitates a community or compassion circles for it to be fully expressed.⁵¹

(4) Research with individuals regarding the impact of spiritual/contemplative practices on compassion

To prove my point that meditation can result in a change in how a person can have compassion over another, I had ten of my current church members take the Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale questionnaire⁵² (see appendix 1) by Susan Sprecher and Beverly Fehr before and after they have completed the Loving Kindness Meditation to Boost Compassion three times and have a day off in between practices. They also answered the Hagerty Questionnaire⁵³ by Michael Hagerty (see appendix 2) to make sense of their experience following each meditation. Finally, they took the Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale once again to determine whether the meditation practice had an effect on their compassion towards others.

⁵⁰ Carolyn Gregoire, “What Neuroscience Can Teach us About Compassion,” *Huffington Post*, accessed October 10, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/13/what-neuroscience-can-tea_n_5268853.html.

⁵¹ Richard Davidson, “Growing Your Compassion Circle,” accessed October 16, 2017, <http://momentousinstitute.org/blog/richie-blog>.

⁵² Susan Sprecher and Beverly Fehr, “Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale,” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, accessed October 16, 2017, <https://backend.fetzer.org/sites/default/files/images/stories/pdf/selfmeasures/CompassionandCompassionateLove-COMPASSIONATELOVEFORHUMANITYSCALE.pdf>.

⁵³ Michael Hagerty, “Hagerty Questionnaire” (Handout received in Your Brain on God? – Neuroscience & Spiritual/Contemplative Practices with Andy Dreitcer, Claremont School of Theology, Claremont, CA, September 29, 2017).

Person number one is a single, 43-year-old woman who was born and raised in the Philippines. Born to a military father she had the opportunity to travel the world and live in different places where she had been exposed to people from different nationalities and cultures. She is also a pre-school teacher at a Christian School, an active lay member of the church, the lead vocalist for the praise band, a young adult group member, and a good church event organizer.

The second person is a sixty-two-year-old male, born in the Philippines. He received a bachelor's degree in Medical Technology, and he went on to become a medical doctor. He practiced in the Philippines before migrating to the United States. Currently, he is not practicing medicine but caring for a two-year-old granddaughter. He is a former lay leader of the church, an active choir member, and regularly attends a Bible Study.

The third person is a 61-year-old female born in Beatrice, Nebraska and raised in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration with a minor in Computer Science from University of Colorado. She also has an MBA National University. She served fifteen years in the Marine Corps as a captain. She was married twice, has no children (except 4 footed and furry). She has been a United Methodist since the early 1960's. She is currently the finance chairperson of the church, and an active choir member.

The fourth person is a 73-year-old male born in Mesa, Arizona, and raised in Southern California. He has a PhD in Educational Administration from a Graduate University. He taught high school for 23 years. He became a high school administrator for 10 years and worked at a university as a professor and dean for 8 years. He has been a United Methodist since 1977.

The fifth person is a 68-year-old woman born in Pampanga, Philippines. She is a college

graduate. She married a military man with whom she had a son and three grandchildren. Married to a military man she was able to live and work in different places. She and her husband retired in Southern California in the early 90's. Now retired, she spends her time attending church activities and taking care of her three grandkids. She has been a United Methodist most of her life.

The sixth person is a 55-year-old woman. She was born and raised in the Inland Empire. She has a degree in production and design. She worked for 10 years as a church secretary. She is married and has three daughters.

The seventh person is a 51-year-old man. He grew up in the Inland Empire. He is married and has three children. He was trained as a civil engineer and has a great deal of experience in the construction of buildings and bridges throughout Southern California. He was a Catholic until he became a United Methodist.

Person number eight is a thirty-eight-year-old male. He is single. After having attended school in the Philippines, he finally graduated from a university in Orange County. He grew up in the United Methodist Church and is currently attending seminary.

The ninth person is a 58-year-old woman. She was born and raised in the Philippines. She served in the military. She is married with three children and numerous grandchildren. She was a Catholic while in the Philippines and after migrating to the US she joined the United Methodist Church. She helped found a United Methodist Church which served the Filipinos of the Inland Empire.

The tenth person is a 28-year-old man. He was born and raised in the Philippines. His family migrated to the US in the late 90's. He is married and has two children. He attends church

regularly and is part of the praise band.

(5) Results of the research

The ten subjects answered the Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale (see Appendix A) and then completed one week of practicing the Loving-Kindness Meditation to Boost Compassion exercise (<https://www.mindful.org/a-loving-kindness-meditation-to-boost-compassion/>) and the Hagerty Questionnaire (see Appendix B). Since they were all new to the practice, I didn't know what to expect. At first, they were all having difficulty getting into the mode. However, once they got started, they were able to go through the practice with ease and with regularity. One difficulty that I encountered at times was my inability to check up on them with regards to their progress in their practice. This is due to the fact that we were in the process of merging seven congregations into one church with three campuses. So, there were times when connecting with the individuals was difficult.

Overall, all ten of them have truly benefited from doing regular spiritual practices for a full week as they try to set aside time in their day to engage in the meditation and to not focus on the daily cares and worries of life. They also thought of this practice as something that places them in a better state of mind, heart, and body (better self) and as something to look forward to.

Subject number one did not complete the Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale which would have allowed me to make some conclusions about the impact of the meditative practice. However, she reflected on her experience as follows: "After taking the test, although it did not change my compassionate level, it did allow me to ponder as to why I am really doing the things that reflect my compassion for humanity and meditating on this just brought me back to thinking about my background. Meditating on this made me realize that feeling compassionate is one

perspective, and actually showing what compassion looks like is another perspective. Overall, in the end of this thought process, it just made me think that our level of compassion could only be measured by our actions. In other words, our level of compassion equals the action behind it.”

The remaining nine subjects all completed both the pre and post versions of the Compassionate Love for Humanity Scale. Subject two had a change in results from the time he took the scale before beginning the meditation practice and his final results after the practice demonstrated a dramatic increase in positive responses to his level of compassion. On the first administration his scores range from 1 to an occasional 4 indicating a lack of compassion. The final administration of the scale his scores increased to a range from 4 to 7, demonstrating a clear increase in his compassion. His comments regarding the exercise were as follows: “Meditating on individuals made me think of their roles in my life. Meditating involves discipline as I found it difficult to always relax. Contemplating individuals who I love and who love me led me to feelings of happiness, good health, and living with ease. This conditioned my mind to project this to become in place. Thinking of these people made me remember the good times we shared.”

In the case of subject three the beginning scale was mixed with some 2’s but many scores already at the 6 level and two 7’s. The changes reflected in the second administration were very minor. In several instances the scale went up one point from 5 to 6 or 6 to 7. This subject indicated that “...it was very hard to do the exercises without instruction and practice, never having meditated or tried mindfulness.” She wrote as follows: “I don’t feel an overall change—just more attuned to the compassion I usually feel and more comfortable answering what ‘compassionate feelings’ are already in me.”

For the fourth subject the range of the pre-test was fairly narrow from 4-6 and there was

an increase in the post test with a range from 5-7. He indicated that there was not any significant “signs” that he experienced during the meditations and that the process often induced a comfortable sleepiness.

The fifth subject had a range of 1-7 but with most scores in the 3-4 range in the pre-testing. In the post testing she had a dramatic increase with a range from 5-7 with most scores in the 6’s and 7’s.

The sixth subject had a range from 2-7 with most scores in the 3-4 range in the pre-testing. The range in her post testing was 4-7 with most scores in the 5-6 range.

The seventh subject had a range of 3-7 in the pre-testing with most scores being 5. The range of the post-testing was still 3-7, but with most scores being 6.

The eighth subject had a range of 3-6 in the pre-testing with most scores in 4-5 range. In the post testing the range was 4-7 with most scores in the 5-6 range.

The ninth subject had a range of 2-7 in the pre-testing with most scores in the 4-5 range. In the post-testing the range was 5-7 with most scores in the 5-6 range.

The tenth subject had a pre-testing range of 1-5 with most scores in the 4-5 range. In the post-testing the range was 3-7 with most scores in the 5-6 range.

(6) Conclusion

While results from this study are very tentative because of the small sample size, I discovered that the meditation practices did impact the subjects in terms of their awareness and understanding of their own compassion and how it relates to their interactions with other people. From the limited results of the Compassionate Loving Love for Humanity Scale, it was evident

that awareness of their compassion was increased in a positive manner. Based on this, I reached a conclusion that meditative practices can increase compassion. There are obvious limits to this study because of its small size, but it does indicate that meditation can impact compassion.

The results of this study confirm the findings discussed in the literature review. All five authors made it evident that meditation and contemplative practices will enhance an individual's compassion. The subjects in this study demonstrated that the research literature was correct.

It seems clear to me that meditative and contemplative practices are potential methods for increasing involvement of congregation members with the community that surrounds their churches. It will still be necessary for the pastor and church leaders to call on the members of the congregation to become involved in the needs of the local community, but with increased compassion that effort should be much more effective. I look forward to implementing these practices with my current congregation in order to enhance their Christian presence and outreach to their community.

D. Other contemplative practices to cultivate compassion

There are additional practices which were identified by Leo Babauta which also have the potential to enhance individuals' capacity for compassion as they interact with other people. These practices could be particularly effective after an individual has completed the Loving-Kindness Meditation exercise. Here are the procedures for implementing the practices as spelled out by Leo Babauta.

Morning ritual: This is an exercise that came from the Dalai Lama. This exercise invites the person to do a morning ritual in which he/she will internalize the following words: "Today I am fortunate to have woken up, I am alive, I have a precious human life, I am not going to waste

it. I am going to use all my energies to develop myself, to expand my heart out to others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, I am going to have kind thoughts towards others, I am not going to get angry or think badly about others, I am going to benefit others as much as I can.”⁵⁴

Empathy practice: In this exercise you try to imagine that a loved one is suffering. Something terrible has happened to the person. You are to imagine the suffering in great detail and then you will try and develop empathy for this individual experiencing this suffering. After doing this practice for a couple of weeks you will be moving on to imagining the suffering of others you know, not just of those persons close to you.

Commonalities practice: Normally we recognize the differences between ourselves and others. For this practice you try to do the opposite as you try to recognize what one has in common with others. At the heart of this is that we are all human beings. We all share a common humanity. We all need food, shelter, and love. We all long for attention, and recognition and affection, and above all, happiness. This exercise encourages the individual to reflect these commonalities he/she has with other people. It is a five-step exercise that you can try when you meet with friends and strangers. Do it discreetly and try to do all the steps with the same person. With your attention focused to the other person, tell yourself:

1. Step 1: “Just like me, this person is seeking happiness in his/her life.”
2. Step 2: “Just like me, this person is trying to avoid suffering in his/her life.”
3. Step 3: “Just like me, this person has known sadness, loneliness and despair.”

⁵⁴ Babauta, 2.

4. Step 4: “Just like me, this person is seeking to fill his/her needs.”
5. Step 5: “Just like me, this person is learning about life.”⁵⁵

Relief of suffering practice. Once the individual can have compassion with another person, and understands his/her humanity and suffering, the next step is to want that person to be alleviated of his/her suffering. Imagine the suffering of a person you met recently. Now imagine that you are the one going through the suffering. Reflect on how much you would like that suffering to end. Reflect on how happy you would be if another person wanted your suffering to end, and acted upon it. Open your heart to that human being and if you feel even a little that you would want their suffering to end, ponder on that feeling. That is the feeling that you would want to develop. With continuous practice, that feeling can be grown and nurtured.

Act of kindness practice. We take a step further with this practice. Imagine again the suffering of an individual you know or met recently. Imagine again that you are that person, and are going through that hardship. Now imagine that another person would like your suffering to end—perhaps someone who is a close loved one. What would you like for that person to do to end your suffering? Now reverse roles: you are now the person who wants the other person’s suffering to end. Imagine that you do something to help alleviate the suffering, or end it completely. Once you do well at this stage, practice doing something small each day to help end the suffering of others, even in a small way. Share a smile, or a kind word, or do an errand or chore, or just talk about a problem with another person. Practice doing something kind to help ease the suffering of others.

Those who mistreat us practice. The final step in these compassion practices is not only to

⁵⁵ Babauta, 3.

free those we love and meet from suffering, but even those who treat us badly. When we meet someone who mistreats us, instead of reacting with anger, withdraw. Later, when you are calm and grounded, reflect on that person who mistreated you. Try to imagine what that person experienced as a child. Try to imagine what that person was going through, and what kind of bad things had happened to that person. Try to imagine the condition of mind that person was in—the suffering that person must have been going through to mistreat you in that manner. And realize that the other person’s action was not about you, but about what they are going through. Now think some more about the suffering of the poor person. And then reflect whether if you mistreated another person, and they responded with kindness and compassion toward you, that would make you less likely to mistreat that person the next time, and more likely to have empathy for that person. Once you have nailed down this practice of reflection, try responding with compassion and understanding the next time a person mistreats you. Do it little by little, until you have mastered it.

Evening routine. Take a few minutes before going to bed to reflect upon your day. Think about the people you met and interacted with, and how you treated each other. Think about your goal that you affirmed this morning, to act with compassion towards others. How well did you do? What could you do better? What did you learn from your experiences today?

IV. **The Church as the Place of Hope and Stability**

A. **Who needs to change?**

In their book *Congregations in Transition* Carl S. Dudley and Nancy Ammerman stress the importance of having a church in a community. Stating that, “In a mobile and fragmented world they are a spiritual home, a gathering place where caring, trusting relationships are built and nurtured. In a world where outside outsider’s voices are often kept silent, congregations

invite those voices to speak. In a world of great need, congregations provide support and comfort, food and shelter, training and advocacy.”⁵⁶ The authors also alluded to the fact that things are no longer the same with churches and communities. So much so that “sustaining” a community of faith in today’s world is both “challenging” and “critical.”⁵⁷ Churches today find themselves in unfamiliar territory as the once familiar landscape of the community they remember has disappeared and was replaced by a lot of detours and road construction. The bottom line is that, for the church to thrive and survive, they have to make some tough choices as they try to re-engage again with their new environment.

B. What does change look like?

Churches today have many options. Dudley and Ammerman discussed seven possibilities. Some attempt to hold their own. Some simply move. Others become terminal and go to the grave. There are those that work hard to re-root themselves planning for new ministries. Some create new ministries related to the gifts, connections, and passions of the congregation. According to the authors the most common response is to begin a new congregation. Finally, some congregations merge. Though there are many options for congregations there is no one right path. Whichever path a church pursues must involve an authentic connection with the people who live in the community.⁵⁸

Kenneth H. Carter Jr. and Audrey Warren present another option for doing church in today’s world. They call it Fresh Expressions. They write that “A fresh expression is a form of church for our changing culture, established primarily for the benefit of people who are not yet members of any church. It will come into being through principles of listening, service,

⁵⁶ Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 1.

⁵⁷ Dudley and Ammerman, 1.

⁵⁸ Dudley and Ammerman, 7-8.

contextual mission and making disciples. It will have the potential to become a mature expression of church shaped by the gospel and the enduring marks of the church and for its cultural context.”⁵⁹

C. How does change happen?

Dr. Joseph W. Daniels Jr. presents a method for churches to make real change. In fact, he uses the word REAL to create an acronym which spells out what a church must do if it truly wants to change. The letters in real stand for relevant, enthusiastic, authentic, and loving. It takes all of these characteristics for a church to experience change and reach the people of the community, especially those who don’t regularly attend church. Dr. Daniels states the following: “When these four are visible and evident within the life of a congregation, that congregation is transforming lives and *being* transformed on a regular basis. People in the congregation and community are being saved from their sins, finding their basic needs met, identifying with their dreams, and achieving God’s purposes for them.”⁶⁰

D. The journey ahead

When I began this research paper I was dealing with a congregation who did not have the urgency to connect with the immediate community. Having changed churches in July of 2016 I didn’t find any real difference in the attitude of the new congregation for who I was the pastor. Even now as I am the co-pastor of a new church that has three campuses and three pastors, I still find many parishioners who also lack the feeling of urgency to connect with the immediate community. Having completed this research, I am very aware of the need to convince the

⁵⁹ Kenneth H. Carter Jr. and Audrey Warren, *Fresh Expressions* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), 3-4.

⁶⁰ Joseph W. Daniels Jr., *The Power of REAL* (Washington, DC: Not Just a Curtin Puller, 2011), 27.

congregation that in order to be followers of Christ they must become connected with the immediate community.

In San Bernardino, the location of my new church appointment, there are many different people in need. Many of these people never intended to stay in this area but found themselves stuck. Most are not individuals who have a formal connection with the church. The people in this group are predominantly members of minority cultures and are low income. They are typically estranged and in need of physical resources and human connection.

The church should be the place where these people can be connected and be offered hope and stability. However, this can only occur if the current members of the church are willing to genuinely reach out and connect with those who are not now part of their church community. This research study shows that in order to get church members to be willing to make those genuine connections they must increase their compassion for those who are estranged from them.

The experiment with ten participants clearly demonstrated that compassion can be increased by engaging in spiritual/contemplative practices. It is apparent that as a pastor I can impact both the current congregation and the community members who are estranged by involving the members of my current church in the practice of spiritual meditation and contemplative practices.

I intend to begin this process by identifying people in my congregation who are indicating they are willing to reach out in order to create connections with those who are estranged from the church. These individuals can be identified by their involvement in programs that demonstrate concern for those who are estranged. They are currently working in feeding and clothes closet programs, veterans support groups, and outreach to public schools. The second step will be to convince those people to sacrifice time and effort to engage in

spiritual/contemplative practices. Because of their willingness to already be involved, I believe they will be interested in furthering their ability to reach those who don't have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

When these individuals have committed to be involved in spiritual/contemplative practices, I will facilitate their execution of the contemplative exercises in order to improve their capacity for compassion. Finally, I will work with this group to create an outreach program which will establish authentic connections with the disconnected community members. In doing this work the members of the church are actually creating a space for those who are not welcomed in other places in society. Such an outreach program will bless both those who are given a space and the current church members who have offered such space. The people who become involved in this program will be honoring and following the migrant God who journeys with His people.

Appendix 1

COMPASSIONATE LOVE FOR HUMANITY SCALE

Reference:

Sprecher, S. & Fehr, B. (2005). Compassionate love for close others and humanity. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 22, 629-651.

Description of Measure:

A 21-item measure designed to measure compassionate love for humanity. Compassionate love toward humanity is defined as an attitude toward humanity that involves behavior, feeling, and thinking that focuses on concern, caring, and support for humanity, as well as a motivation to understand and help humanity (strangers) when they are most in need. And, "humanity" is considered anyone who is a stranger (not a close other). Respondents answer each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (very true of me).

Abstracts of Selected Related Articles:

Sprecher, S. & Fehr, B. (2006). Enhancement of mood and self-esteem as a result of giving and receiving compassionate love. *Current Research in Social Psychology*, 11, 227-242.

Compassionate love may be the type of love that leads to the most social good for those who are its recipients. However, self-benefits may also occur as a result of experiencing compassionate love for others. Three studies were conducted in which people were asked to recall a specific experience of compassionate love and to indicate how they were affected on several dimensions (mood, self-esteem, closeness to others). In Study 1, participants were asked to recall an experience of compassionate love without specification of target. A manipulation of the context of compassionate love (relational vs. non-relational) was included in Studies 2 and 3. A comparison of compassionate love given versus received was also included in Study 3. Overall, the results indicated that people reap many positive benefits of experiencing compassionate love for others. Differences in perceived outcomes to the self based on relational context and role (giver vs. receiver) were also found and discussed.

Krueger, R. F., Hicks, B. M., & McGue, M. (2001). Altruism and antisocial behavior: Independent tendencies, unique personality correlates, distinct etiologies. *Psychological Science*, 12, 397-402.

The relationship between altruism and antisocial behavior has received limited attention because altruism and antisocial behavior tend to be studied and discussed in distinct literatures. Our research bridges these literatures by focusing on three fundamental questions. First, are altruism and antisocial behavior opposite ends of a single dimension, or can they coexist in the same individual? Second, do altruism and antisocial behavior have the same or distinct etiologies? Third, do they stem from the same or from distinct aspects of a person's personality? Our findings indicate that altruism and antisocial behavior are uncorrelated tendencies stemming from different sources. Whereas altruism was linked primarily to shared (i.e., familial) environments, unique (i.e., nonfamilial) environments, and personality traits reflecting positive emotionality, antisocial behavior was linked primarily to genes, unique environments, and personality traits reflecting negative emotionality and a lack of constraint.

Penner, L. A., Dovidio, J. F., Piliavin, J. A., & Schroeder, D. A. (2005). Prosocial behavior: Multilevel perspectives. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 56, 14.1-14.28.

Current research on prosocial behavior covers a broad and diverse range of phenomena. We argue that this large research literature can be best organized and understood from a multilevel perspective. We identify three levels of analysis of prosocial behavior: (a) the “meso” level—the study of helper-recipient dyads in the context of a specific situation; (b) the micro level—the study of the origins of prosocial tendencies and the sources of variation in these tendencies; and (c) the macro level—the study of prosocial actions that occur within the context of groups and large organizations. We present research at each level and discuss similarities and differences across levels. Finally, we consider ways in which theory and research at these three levels of analysis might be combined in future intra- and interdisciplinary research on prosocial behavior.

Scale

- 1.) When I see people I do not know feeling sad, I feel a need to reach out to them.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 2.) I spend a lot of time concerned about the well-being of humankind.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 3.) When I hear about someone (a stranger) going through a difficult time, I feel a great deal of compassion for him or her.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 4.) It is easy for me to feel the pain (and joy) experienced by others, even though I do not know them.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 5.) If I encounter a stranger who needs help, I would do almost anything I could to help him or her.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 6.) I feel considerable compassionate love for people from everywhere.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 7.) I would rather suffer myself than see someone else (a stranger) suffer.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 8.) If given the opportunity, I am willing to sacrifice in order to let the people from other places who are less fortunate achieve their goals.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 9.) I tend to feel compassion for people even though I do not know them.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

- 10.) One of the activities that provides me with the most meaning to my life is helping others in the world who need help.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

11.) I would rather engage in actions that help others, even though they are strangers, than engage in actions that would help me.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

12.) I often have tender feelings toward people (strangers) when they seem to be in need.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

13.) I feel a selfless caring for most of mankind.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

14.) I accept others whom I do not know even when they do things I think are wrong.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

15.) If a person (a stranger) is troubled, I usually feel extreme tenderness and caring.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

16.) I try to understand rather than judge people who are strangers to me.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

17.) I try to put myself in a stranger's shoes when he or she is in trouble.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

18.) I feel happy when I see that others (strangers) are happy.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

19.) Those whom I encounter through work and public life can assume that I will be there for them if they need me.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

20.) I want to spend time with people I don't know well so that I can help enrich their lives.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

21.) I very much wish to be kind and good to fellow human beings.

not at all true of me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *very true of me*

Scoring

An average score is calculated for all 21 items. Scoring is kept continuous.

Appendix 2

“Hagerty Questionnaire”

(AD Version, 2--12)

Name: _

Date: _

HOW MUCH of each quality below do you experience during your practice. CIRCLE the number that indicates how LOW or how HIGH you experience each quality.

TRANQUILITY (calmness or freedom from upset).

LOW tranquility 0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----
-8-----9-----10 HIGH tranquility

INNER SPEECH (self-talk, coaching, criticizing, or describing).

LOW inner speech
0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
HIGH inner speech

BODY SENSATION (whether you can feel your body versus whether you feel weightless, floating in space, etc).

LOW Body sensations
0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10 HIGH Body
sensations

EFFORT (how much control you must exert. Are "you doing it (high effort), or is it doing you (low effort)?")

LOW Effort
0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----
-9-----10 HIGH Effort

RAPTURE (how much energy, excitement, effervescence you feel).

LOW Rapture
0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----
-----10 HIGH Rapture

SWEETNESS (how happy, satisfied you feel).

LOW Sweetness
0-----1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----
--10 HIGH Sweetness

Do you get SIGNS such as bright light or physical sensations?

Prepared by Michael Hagerty, with modifications by Andrew Dreitzer,
2--7--12

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